

## Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 ISFAHA 00092 01 OF 02 101432Z  
ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SES-02 IO-13 OMB-01 TRSE-00 CIAE-00

DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05

PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11 SY-05 A-01 OPR-02 HA-05

/093 W

-----075441 101522Z /46

R 101313Z SEP 78

FM AMCONSUL ISFAHAN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 44

INFO AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

AMCONSUL SHIRAZ

AMCONSUL TABRIZ

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 ISFAHAN 0092

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, IR

SUBJ: ISFAHAN REACTION TO NEW GOVERNMENT

SUMMARY: ISFAHANIS DISMISS THE NEW IRANIAN GOVERNEMENT AS A CARTAKERBODY LEADING TO THE NEXT ELECTIONS ONLY. HOWEVER, SINCE THEY DOUBT THIS GOVERNMENT HAS ANY INDEPENDENT AUTHORITY, THEY ARE INTERESTED IN ITS ACTIONS AS A GUIDE TO THE SHAH'S THINKING. SO FAR, THEY SEE NO SIGNS OF ANY BASIC CHANGE: THEY BELIEVE THE SHAH IS HOPING TO GET BY WITH PALLIATIVES AND WORDS. THEY DO NOT BELIEVE HE WILL SUCCEED AND ARE WAITING FOR ACTIONS. END SUMMARY.

1. THE DISMISSAL OF THE AMOUZAGAR GOVERNMENT CAME AS NO SURPRISE TO THE PEOPLE OF ISFAHAN. FOR OVER A MONTH, A MAJOR TOPIC OF CONVERSATION HAD BEEN WHOU WOULD BE NAMED TO REPLACE AMOUZAGAR. THE NAMING OF JAAFAR SHARIF-EMAMI, HOWEVER, WAS SURPRISE AND A DISAPPOINTMENT. MANY POEPLE HAD BEEN EXPECTING THE NEW GOVERNMENT TO INDICATE A REAL DESIRE FOR CHANGE, AND POINT THE WAY TOWARD NEW DIRECTIONS. SHARIF-EMAMI THEY DISMISS AS AN OLD MAN WITH NO STRENGHT,

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PAGE 02 ISFAHA 00092 01 OF 02 101432Z

WHOSE MAJOR FUNCTION WILL BE TO FILL THE SEAT UNTIL A REAL GOVERNMENT CAN BE FORMED, PROBABLY FOLLOWING NEXT YEAR'S ELECTIONS. HIS CABINET ALSO IS LARGELY DISMISSED AS "HOLD-OVERS AND OLD MEN" WHO ARE NOT EXPECTED TO ACCOMPLISH ANYTHING OF SUBSTANCE.

3. SOME RESPONSE IS POSITIVE. THE MAJOR OF ISFAHAN STATED

THAT THIS GOVERNMENT IS A GOOD THING, BECAUSE "IT SHOWS THAT THE SHAH IS NOT GOING TO BE HASTY. HE IS WAITING FOR THE POLITICAL ACTIVITY AND THE ELECTIONS TO SHOW HIM WHAT THE PEOPLE REALLY WANT." OTHERS POINT OUT THAT, "IF THE SHAH WANTS IT, THESE MEN CAN BE USED TO ELIMINATE CORRUPT OFFICIALS WITHOUT CREATING ENEMIES FOR THE NEXT GOVERNMENT." ONE MODERATE MULLAH SAID THAT "SHARIF-EMAMI IS ALMOST A MULLAH HIMSELF. HE WILL CREATE AN ATMOSPHERE WHERE RELIGIOUS MODERATES CAN FIGHT THE EXTREMISTS WITHOUT BEING TAKEN EXTREMISTS THEMSELVES."

4. MOST OF THE COMMENTS, HOWEVER, ARE NEGATIVE. A LEADING INDUSTRIALIST STATED "SHARIF-EMAMI HAS NO SUPPORT. HE CANNOT ATTACK CORRUPTION; HE CANNOT CHANGE THE DIRECTION OF POLICIES; ALL HE CAN, AND WILL, DO IS ISSUE STATEMENTS, AND HE IS FOOLISH ENOUGH TO BELIEVE HIS STATEMENTS WILL HAVE EFFECT." SOME GO FARTHER. ONE COLLEGE TEACHER IS AFRAID OF EMAMI. "HE WILL WANT TO BE LIKED, AND WILL PLACATE THE MULLAHS BY GIVING THEM EVERYTHING THEY ASK FOR. THEY WILL ONLY ASK FOR MORE, AND WE WILL HAVE CHAOS OR A RELIGIOUS DICTATORSHIP EVEN BEFORE THE ELECTIONS."

5. MOST PEOPLE ARE JUST IGNORING SHARIF-EMAMI. ANNOUNCEMENTS OF POLITICAL ACTIVITY ARE BEING FOLLOWED CLOSELY. AND THEREIS A GREAT DEAL OF SPECULATION ABOUT THE

CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 03 ISFAHA 00092 01 OF 02 101432Z

CHANCES OF DIFFERENT INDIVIDUALS OBTAINING ENOUGH PUBLICH POLITICAL POWER TO BE ABLE TO DEMAND A CHANCE TO FORM THE NEXT GOVERNMENT. GOVERNMENT ACTIONS, SUCH AS CLOSING CASINOS AND REVERTING TO ISLAMIC CALENDAR, ARE SEEN AS SHAH'S ATTEMPTS TO PLACATE RELIGIOUS PARTIES, AND PEOPLE ARE WAITING FOR THE NEXT SHOE TO FALL. THEY DO NOT BELIEVE ANYTHING SO FAR DONE OR PROMISED WILL SUCCEED IN SATISFYING THE RELIGIOUS AND THEREFORE, ACCORDING TO INDIVIDUAL BELIEFS, ARE HOPEFUL OR FEARFUL THAT THE SHAH WILL GO FARTHER. IN MOSQUES IN ISFAHAN, PREACHERS ARE DECLARING THAT THE SHAH WILL REINSTITUTE THE RELIGIOUS VETO POWER OVER ALL LEGISLATION, POPULAR ELCTION OF THE RELIGIOUS HIERARCHY, AND IMPLEMENTATION OF REGULATIONS REQUIREING FULL OBSERVANCE OF ISLAMIC PRACTICES IN ALL PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS, INCLUDING SCHOOLS AND UNIVERSITIES. THEY POINT TO THE ABOLITION OF THE MINISTRY FOR WOMEN'S

CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 01 ISFAHA 00092 02 OF 02 101440Z

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CONFIDENTIAL SECTION 2 OF 2 ISFAHAN 0092

AFFAIRS AS THE FIRST STEP IN RECREATING AN ISLAMIC SOCIETY IN IRAN. MODERNISTS IN ISFAHAN ARE ALSO POINTING TO THE ELIMINATION OF THE WOMEN'S PORTFOLIO IN FAVOR OF A RELIGIOUS ENDOWMENTS PORTFOLIO, BUT WITH ALARM. THE HEAD OF THE WOMEN'S ORGANIZATION IN ISFAHAN HAS SAID SHE WILL RESIGN "IF THE MULLAHS ATTEMPT TO ROLL BACK ANY PROGRESS WE HAVE MADE." THE CONSULATE HAS RECEIVED OVER TWELVE INQUIRIES FROM PARENTS OF GIRLS AT THE UNIVERSITIES HERE, SAYING THAT IF THE UNIVERSITIES REQUIRE CHADORS AND ISSUE OTHER "ANTI-WOMEN" REGULATIONS, THEY WILL WISH TO TRANSFER THEIR DAUGHTERS TO SCHOOLS IN THE U.S. GROUP OF FEMALE TEACHERS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF ISFAHAN HAVE SENT A LETTER TO THE CHANCELLOR DECLARING THAT THEY WILL NOT WEAR CHADORS AND REQUESTING HIS ASSURANCES THAT SUCH CHANGES ARE NOT INTENDED. A WIDESPREAD FEAR IS THAT, BY GOING THIS FAR, THE SHAH HAS GIVEN THE RELIGIOUS REACTIONARIES A FEELING OF POWER, AND NOW HE MUST EITHER CONTINUE TO GIVE IN, OR CRACK DOWN ON THEM--AND EITHER MIGHT PROVOKE DISTURBANCES MUCH WORSE THAN IRAN HAS SEEN SO FAR.

6. ISFAHANIS ARE CONSERVATIVE, AND WHILE THEY TALK A LOT

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 ISFAHA 00092 02 OF 02 101440Z

ABOUT THE VARIOUS POLITICAL GROUPS FORMING, THERE HAS BEEN SO FAR NO POLITICAL ACTIVITY OR DECLARATION HERE, EXCEPT THAT THE ONCE-OFFICIAL RESURGENCE PARTY (RPPI) IS REAPIDLY LOSING BOTH STAFF AND ADHERENTS. IT IS WIDELY ASSUMED THAT THE RPPI IS FINISHED AND WILL PROBABLY NOT EVEN

CONTEST THE NEXT ELECTIONS.

7. ISFAHAN REMAINS UNDER MARTIAL LAW, WITH NIGHT-TIME CURFEW AND A BAN ON ALL PUBLIC GATHERINGS. HOWEVER, AUTHORITIES ARE BEING VERY CAREFUL OF INTERFERING WITH ANYTHING WHICH LOOKS POLITICAL. THE NEWSPAPER ANNOUNCEMENT OF AYATOLLAH KHOMEINI'S RETURN FROM EXILE IN IRAQ (LATER PROVED FALSE) ENGENDERED LARGE GATHERINGS IN MOSQUES AND ON THE MAJOR STREETS WITH NOISY DISCUSSION. TROOPS GRADUALLY DISPERSED THESE GATHERINGS, BUT GENTLY AND WITH NO CONFRONTATIONS--IN SHARP CONTRAST TO THE VIOLENT TACTICS THEY USED TO BREAK UP GATHERINGS SHORTLY AFTER MARTIAL LAW WAS IMPOSED. THE MARTIAL LAW ADMINISTRATION REPORTS IT HAS ALREADY RECEIVED A NUMBER OF INQUIRIES ABOUT THE LEGALITY OF HOLDING POLITICAL MEETINGS AND IS CONSIDERING PERMITTING THEM, BUT ONLY INSIDE HALLS WITH LIMITED ATTENDANCE AND TROOPS ON STANBY. THEY ASSUME THAT THE LIFTING OF THE CURFEW WILL ALLOW THE BEGINNING OF ELECTION ACTIVITY AND THAT THERE WILL BE A GREAT DEAL OF IT.

8. CONCLUSIONS: ISFAHANIS ARE TREATING THE NEW GOVERNMENT AS THE SIGNAL FOR THE BEGINNING OF POLITICAL ACTIVITY LEADING TO ELECTIONS IN THE SPRING. THEY ARE ALTERNATIVELY ENCOURGED OR FEARFUL OVER WHAT BOTH SIDES SEE ASSAN INADEQUATE ATTEMPT TO APPEASE THE RELIGIOUS REACTIONARY FACTION, AND ARE EXCITED ENOUGH TO PARTIALLY DISREGARD MARTIAL LAW REGULATIONS. ONCE MARTIAL LAW IS LIFTED OR

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 ISFAHA 00092 02 OF 02 101440Z

RELAXED, MAJOR POLITICAL ACTIVITY WILL OCCUR IN ISFAHAN.

9. EMBASSY TEHRAN COMMENT: MOST TEHRANIS AS WELL AS THIS EMBASSY ARE NOT AS READY TO WRITE OFF THE SHARIF-EMAMI GOVERNMENT AS SOME OF THE CITIZENS OF ISFAHAN ARE. WITH THIS EXCEPTION, MANY OF THE VIEW EXPRESSED IN ISFAHAN ARE ALSO HELD IN TEHRAN AND ELSEWHERE, PARTICULARLY THE FEELINGS OF CONCERN ON ONE HAND AND HOPE ON THE OTHER ABOUT THE SHAH'S POLICY OF APPEASING THE MULLAHS. ABOVE ANALYSIS WAS COMPLETED SEPT. 3, PRIOR TO IMPOSITION OF MARTIAL LAW IN 12 ADDITIONAL IRANIAN CITIES BESIDES ISFAHAN.

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